

**SPECIAL MEETING
MINUTES
BROWN COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY
Thursday, December 17, 2009
City Hall
100 N. Jefferson Street, Room 604
Green Bay, WI 54301
10:30 a.m.**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Darlene Hallet-Chair, Michael Welch-Vice Chair (via teleconference) Rich Aicher.

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Paul Kendle, Tom Diedrick

MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

OTHERS PRESENT: Rob Strong, Robyn Hallet, Jacob Lopez, Kristin Byrne (media), Patrick Sheppard (media), David Dolan-Wallace (GBHA-Chair), Daniel Slater (GBHA), and Ald. Piton (GBHA), Molly Barron, Dave Johnson, Ray Kurth.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Discussion and possible action on Freedom House's request for financial assistance.

D. Hallet called the Brown County Housing Authority meeting to order.

D. Dolan-Wallace called the Green Bay Housing Authority meeting to order.

R. Hallet explained that Robyn Davis from Freedom House was set to make a presentation to both Authorities on December 9, 2009, but the meeting had to be rescheduled because of the snow storm. At about 4:00 p.m. yesterday, she realized that Robyn Davis had not been informed of the rescheduled date for the presentation and due to prior commitments, was unable to attend today and sends her apologies.

R. Hallet stated that she and R. Strong had spoken to R. Davis on the phone on December 7, 2009, to obtain additional information in addition to what has been provided in the agenda packet. She stated that if anyone had any questions, she would try to answer them.

R. Hallet stated that the handout provided by Freedom House shows shortages/overages for the following months:

December 2009	-\$11,410.00
January 2010	-\$6,880.00
February 2010	+\$184.00
March 2010	-\$9,541.00

R. Hallet stated that when she spoke to R. Davis yesterday, their fundraiser with Barb's Center for Dance was very successful and they made more money than they anticipated. Approximately \$15,000.00 was raised through that fundraiser and R. Davis believes that those funds will take them through the month of December. Freedom House is still looking for help starting in January 2010.

R. Aicher asked if Freedom House had mentioned anything about restructuring their long term debt payment on their mortgage. The annual principal payment is significant and if they could get some relief on that, it would help them out on the short term basis as well.

R. Hallet stated that R. Davis did not mention anything regarding that.

D. Hallet stated that R. Davis mentioned at the last meeting of the Brown County Housing Authority that the end of the year usually brings in more donations because people are looking at funding for the end of the year.

R. Hallet stated that R. Davis did include that when she provided the figures for the handout.

Ald. Piton stated Freedom House is a good cause and is one of the few places that people with kids can go when they need a place to stay. If the Green Bay Housing Authority has the ability to help Freedom House through a rough patch, he does support that. His concern would be if it were an ongoing obligation. It seems to him that the help the Housing Authorities could provide would give Freedom House the time to get the fundraising efforts going.

R. Aicher stated that it appears Freedom House's annual budget is around \$600,000.00. Based on the monthly expenses and projected income, the \$60,000.00 would fit right into a \$600,000.00 annual budget.

Ald. Piton stated that while it would be helpful to know if Freedom House is looking into restructuring their long term debt, it seems that the Director is doing the right things to keep this organization serving the needs of the community.

R. Aicher stated that he personally would like to know the answer to the restructuring of the long term debt because it was previously presented to the Authority.

D. Hallet stated that she knows R. Davis has been actively pursuing donations from the community.

R. Hallet stated that the handouts provided by Freedom House show what funds they believe they will be receiving. From her discussion with R. Davis, Freedom House estimated these numbers on the low end so that they could be sure that they are meeting the minimum budget.

M. Welch stated that from what he sees, the shortfall total through March would be approximately \$12,600.00 instead of \$60,000.00.

R. Hallet stated that in the discussion she had with R. Davis over the phone, R. Davis was confident that Freedom House would be viable going forward. They have a lot of different efforts to raise funds that they are just starting on. Once these things get rolling, they feel they will be able to get a lot more money in from donations and fundraising efforts. They are just looking for assistance to get past this difficult time.

R. Strong stated that if the Authorities did want to provide financial assistance, it could be structured to not exceed a certain amount and for only a certain time frame. The Authorities could also ask that after a certain amount of time, that Freedom House give an update on its fundraising efforts and where they stand financially. He did make it clear to R. Davis that the Authorities did not want their funding to become a maintenance fund and for Freedom House to count on it every year. This would be just to get Freedom House through this rough time and then they would be on their own after that.

Ald. Piton stated that to him, the worst case scenario is that Freedom House will stay open another six months and we spend money to make that happen. Hopefully within those six months Director Davis can reshape the organization and finances in such a way so that Freedom House can thrive.

R. Strong stated that the five year plans for both the Green Bay Housing Authority and the Brown County Housing Authority have identified family need as a mission. He does not believe that doing this would be setting a precedent and both Authorities are staying within their five year plan.

R. Aicher stated that he felt that there needed to be accountability on a monthly basis. If there is a month where they have more funds than they had predicted, then the amount of funds needed from the Authorities would shrink accordingly. He would like to see a report each month of the finances they have, the expenditures, and what effort is being done to bring money in to Freedom House.

D. Hallet stated that a question she would have liked to ask R. Davis is what happens to the families after they are helped through Freedom House.

R. Hallet stated that Freedom House's goal is to get the families that utilize their services to a point where they are able to provide for themselves living independently. She read from the materials previously provided by Freedom House which state that adult residents are required to attend budget/finance classes, basic parenting classes, job skills training, computer classes and other optional classes. D. Slater also reiterated the life advancement services Freedom House provides its residents.

R. Strong stated that from what he knows about Freedom House and their programs, they do a pretty good job of helping families become independent. They can't just shelter them for a period of time and then turn them loose. They have a high success rate with families not needing to return to Freedom House.

R. Hallet stated that R. Davis is willing to come back in January if the Authorities would rather not make a decision today. R. Hallet stated that she feels badly because staff did not notify R. Davis of the meeting today and also, she doesn't want to inconvenience the commissioners by having to schedule another meeting.

D. Hallet stated that Freedom House seems to have enough funds for December so maybe having R. Davis come back in January would be a good idea.

Ald. Piton stated that the piece that is missing for him is what is in their checking account right now.

R. Hallet responded that when she and R. Strong spoke with R. Davis on December 7th, they did ask her that and at that time they had \$7,600.00 in their checking account and \$1,400.00 in their savings account. R. Davis also stated that they have another account, which has money that is specifically used for a future project. They would like to build a duplex to provide transitional housing to families. They have done a lot of fundraising for this particular project and have raised a significant amount of money. They partnered with Merrill Lynch for this fundraising and they currently have over \$119,000.00 in that fund. Merrill Lynch did agree that they could draw from those funds if it became a necessity to keep their doors open. The Board for Freedom House is truly dedicated to this duplex project and would like to leave that option as a last resort.

Both Authorities agree that what needs to be decided is the amount needed, how it would be split between the two Authorities, and how long would this need be for. The idea of creating a temporary account and having Freedom House inform the Authorities every month of how much they need to draw to fund the existing operation and not any growth of the organization is something both Authorities agree on. The Authorities agree that this is a one time effort on their part.

M. Welch questioned what the timeframe would be.

R. Hallet stated that the money they just made from the fundraiser with Barb's Center of Dance is designed to add to their year long budget and not just to cover one month. However, that money is available if necessary to get through this month.

F. Aicher suggested looking at a cap for how much money the Authorities would give to Freedom House and for what period of time.

F. Strong stated that what he is hearing is that the Authorities are interested in continuing to look at this request from Freedom House. They would like to hear from R. Davis again and have a twelve month budget laid out estimating their shortfalls and showing what they are planning to do over the next twelve months. Also, the Authorities would like to have an answer on the restructuring of their bank loan.

F. Hallet stated that Freedom House has hired someone to work on fundraising and grants. They are updating their website so that people are able to donate

online more easily. They are doing a lot of different things that make it sound like the future is going to look a lot better for them.

R. Strong stated that the Green Bay Housing Authority has approximately \$600,000.00 of unrestricted bond funds. He stated that later in this meeting staff is going to ask the Green Bay Housing Authority to obligate approximately \$200,000.00 as a cushion for a project that is ongoing and that would reduce the amount available to \$400,000.00.

A motion was made by Ald. Piton and seconded by Daniel Slater for the Green Bay Housing Authority to pay 30% of the amount to be provided by the GBHA and BCHA up to a maximum of \$30,000.00, to be spent over the twelve months of 2010 for shortages to fund the existing operation of Freedom House based on their need monthly, with a monthly report provided to the Authorities for at least the first quarter of 2010. Motion carried.

M. Welch stated that Freedom House needs to understand that this is a short term source of funding.

R. Strong stated that a statement to that effect could be put into the agreement so that there is no misunderstanding.

A motion was made by M. Welch and seconded by R. Aicher supporting the action made by the Green Bay Housing Authority but that they would like additional information from Freedom House such as the restructuring of their long term debt. If Freedom House is acceptable to this, the Brown County Housing Authority is very interested in continuing to look into this request. Motion carried.

A motion was made by R. Aicher and seconded by M. Welch to adjourn the special meeting of the Brown County Housing Authority at 11:30 a.m. Motion carried.